



Arizona Game and Fish Department - June 24, 2010

# Situation Report - Borderlands

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The U.S. Border Patrol now estimates there are 900 apprehensions daily in its Tucson sector, ranging from New Mexico to the Yuma County line. There are fewer apprehensions in the Yuma sector. (See statistics in attachments).

Nine AGFD game management units are on the border. Seven are within the Border Patrol's Tucson sector, including the one in which Douglas area rancher Robert Krentz was murdered March 27. In another of those units, two Department employees and a county worker were fired upon by a suspected lookout for drug smugglers in June 2009. Two game management units are in the Altar Valley which, according to an Arizona Daily Star database, has the highest incidence of illegal immigrant deaths in the state.

Two game management units along the border are within the Border Patrol's Yuma sector. These areas currently experience less smuggling activity, although the areas are extremely remote and thus would hinder emergency response.

Unit 40A, while not connected to the southern international boundary, borders the Tohono O'odham nation and is a heavily used smuggling corridor. The Vekol Valley and adjacent area within Unit 40A have been the site of recent ongoing violent encounters, including the April 30 shooting of a Pinal County Deputy as well as the apparent murder of two suspected bandits in early June.

To date there is no precise mapping of the numerous "layup" spots in the borderlands region where, after crossing the border, migrant workers discard clothing and personal effects while awaiting vehicle transport elsewhere.

Most layup spots are located incidentally or by aerial surveillance. Drug "mules," "spotters" for drug and human smuggling operations, and bandits may be unexpectedly encountered among illegal immigrants in the area. Border Patrol presence and activities in the area are accordingly high.

## AGFD Regional Law Enforcement Program

Given the border situation, violence is the primary concern for the program in southern Arizona and a daily threat to wildlife officers and non-commissioned staff who must now be accompanied by officers when working in highly trafficked areas. An officer and biologist experienced a neutral encounter with four drug smugglers on June 21 in the Sand Tank Mountains. The outcome may have been different if the employees hadn't observed the traffickers first.

### Interagency law enforcement needs:

- Improved communication with the Border Patrol specifically and federal officials generally (including upgraded radio capability to keep up with the federal government radio systems, enabling communication with any federal agency that works along the border).
- Improved inclusion of Game and Fish in Homeland Security funding opportunities.

### Such tools are needed to counter the increased threat posed by:

- Smugglers using Game and Fish activities to cover illegal activity, primarily drug loads. (For example, AGFD securing access for hunters to ranchlands incidentally opens routes for smugglers).
  - Smugglers using wildlife water catchments as water sources and layup sites. Some waters have been damaged by smugglers attempting to access the tank (rather than drink from the trough). This also creates a safety concern for staff who monitor and maintain these wildlife drinkers.
  - The apparent use of off-highway vehicles for recreational purposes that in fact are being used by drug smuggling operations.
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- Safety concerns at night, which have led to a 50 percent reduction in hunt camps in borderlands areas. Five of the units on the border have the most unused deer hunting permits in any given hunting season.
- The position of the border fence along the Colorado River near San Luis, Ariz., has restricted vehicle access to some popular fishing and hunting areas along the river.
- Many of the recreationists who now encounter warning signs upon entry into the Sonoran Desert National Monument are hunters and off-highway vehicle recreationists.

Despite such challenges, progress has been made in some areas. For example, the Department now has better relationships with other regional law enforcement agencies, including the Tucson Area Group (TAG) for intelligence sharing; weekly, if not daily, Be-On-The-Lookouts and officer safety alerts; and heightened awareness for non-commissioned employees.

### Law Enforcement Directive Allowing Possession of Handgun During an Archery-Only Season

The Department in 2005 issued a law enforcement directive allowing individuals to possess a handgun for personal protection and safety while participating in an “archery only” hunt. The Department previously had not allowed individuals participating in archery-only hunts to possess any type of firearm based on R12-4-318(C)(2).

### Landowner Relations Program

Littering at layup spots first became apparent in 1998-99, as did a corresponding increase in undocumented alien sightings in the region. In response, the Department facilitated development of a coalition known as Hunters Who Care, which began as a concept discussed on a bowhunting website in 2002.

Starting with 15 volunteers, the group now numbers approximately 300, and has done 14 cleanups to date. For example, AGFD staff and volunteers removed approximately 14 tons of trash from six border ranches in the region in December 2009 and March 2010. Participants have included the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance, Safari Club International, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Pima County Department of Conservation, Parks and Recreation, and the Boy Scouts of America.

The effort has led to six agreements for hunter access, as well as funding for installation of cattle guards and road improvements for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. However, layup spots have often returned to a littered state. In one case, a site that took five volunteers six hours to clear 16 loads of garbage was in nearly as bad condition some six months later.

### Information & Education Program

The issues of borderlands safety and the environmental impacts of illegal immigration have been covered by the Arizona Daily Star and KVOA-TV/Tucson, as well as by community newspapers such as the Green Valley News, as a result of media relations initiatives by the Department. Such news coverage has generated additional cleanup volunteers in the form of concerned citizens and groups, including members of the Southern Arizona Rescue Association. In the meantime, a workshop on borderlands safety has been offered to sportsmen and conservationists throughout the region.

Information also is included in the 2010-11 Arizona Hunting and Trapping Regulations, advising that homeland security issues along the international border may affect the quality of a person’s hunt. The area of concern is denoted on the statewide and regional maps included in the regulations. The advisement also encourages individuals to call 1-800-BE-ALERT to report suspicious activity.

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Tucson Sector		
	FY 2009 (YTD)	FY 2010 (YTD)
Alien Apprehensions	179,254	180,791
Marijuana Seized	938,217 lbs.	775,142 lbs.
Street Value of Seized Marijuana	\$720,825,976	\$592,210,606
Rescues	262	316
Deaths	114	133
Figures for Oct. 1 through June 21 of each fiscal year.		

Border Patrol Yuma Sector Statistics		
	FY 2009	FY 2010 (YTD)
Alien Apprehensions	3,427	4,229
Marijuana Seized	51,695 lbs.	23,142 lbs.
Cocaine Seized	75.90 lbs.	305.59 lbs.
Methamphetamines Seized	35.36 lbs.	139.44 lbs.
Street Value of Seized Drugs	\$46,536,248	\$32,858,652
Rescues	19	9
Figures for Oct. 1 through end of fiscal year. Data for FY 2010 is from Oct. 1, 2009, through April 2, 2010.		

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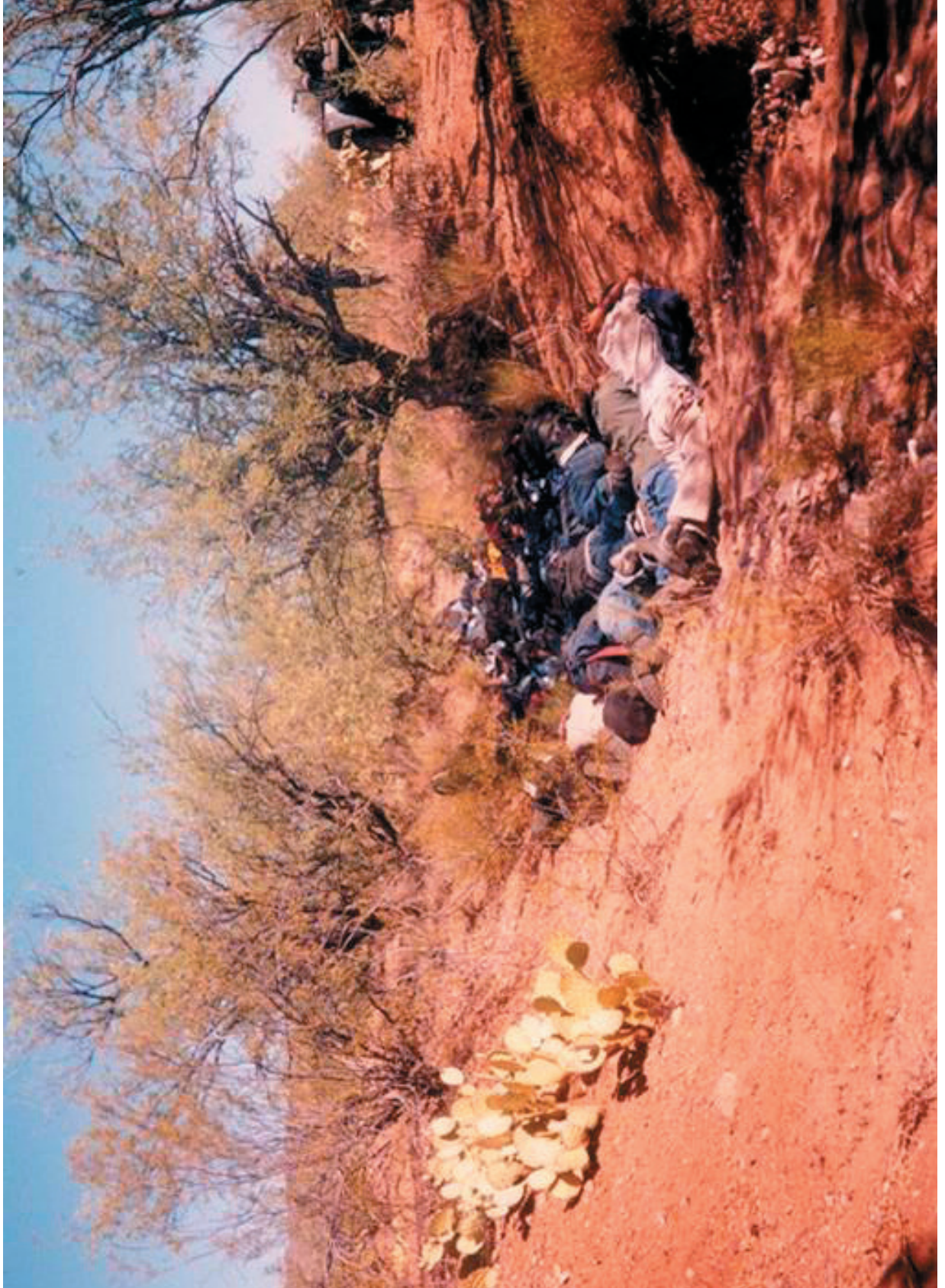
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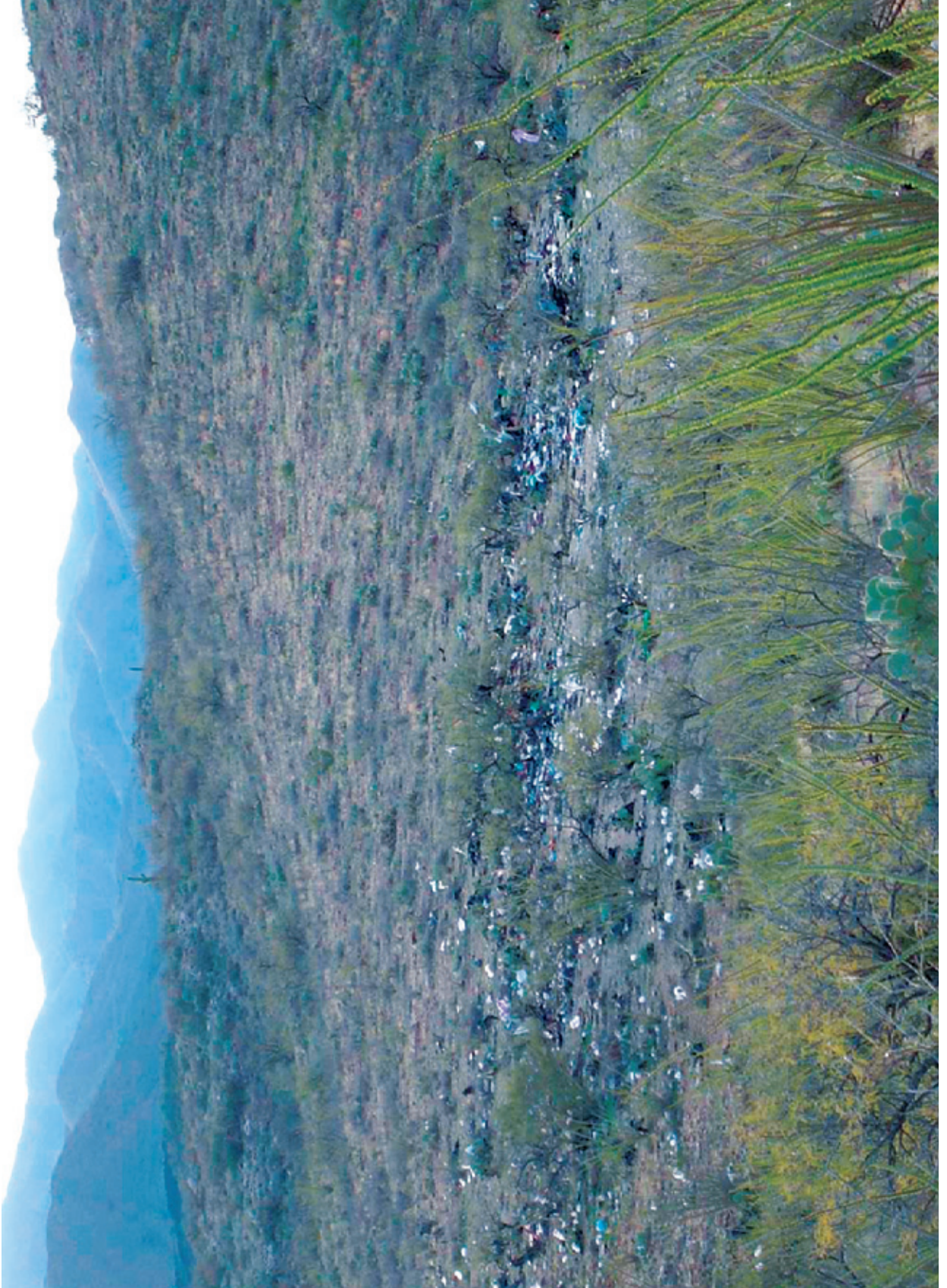
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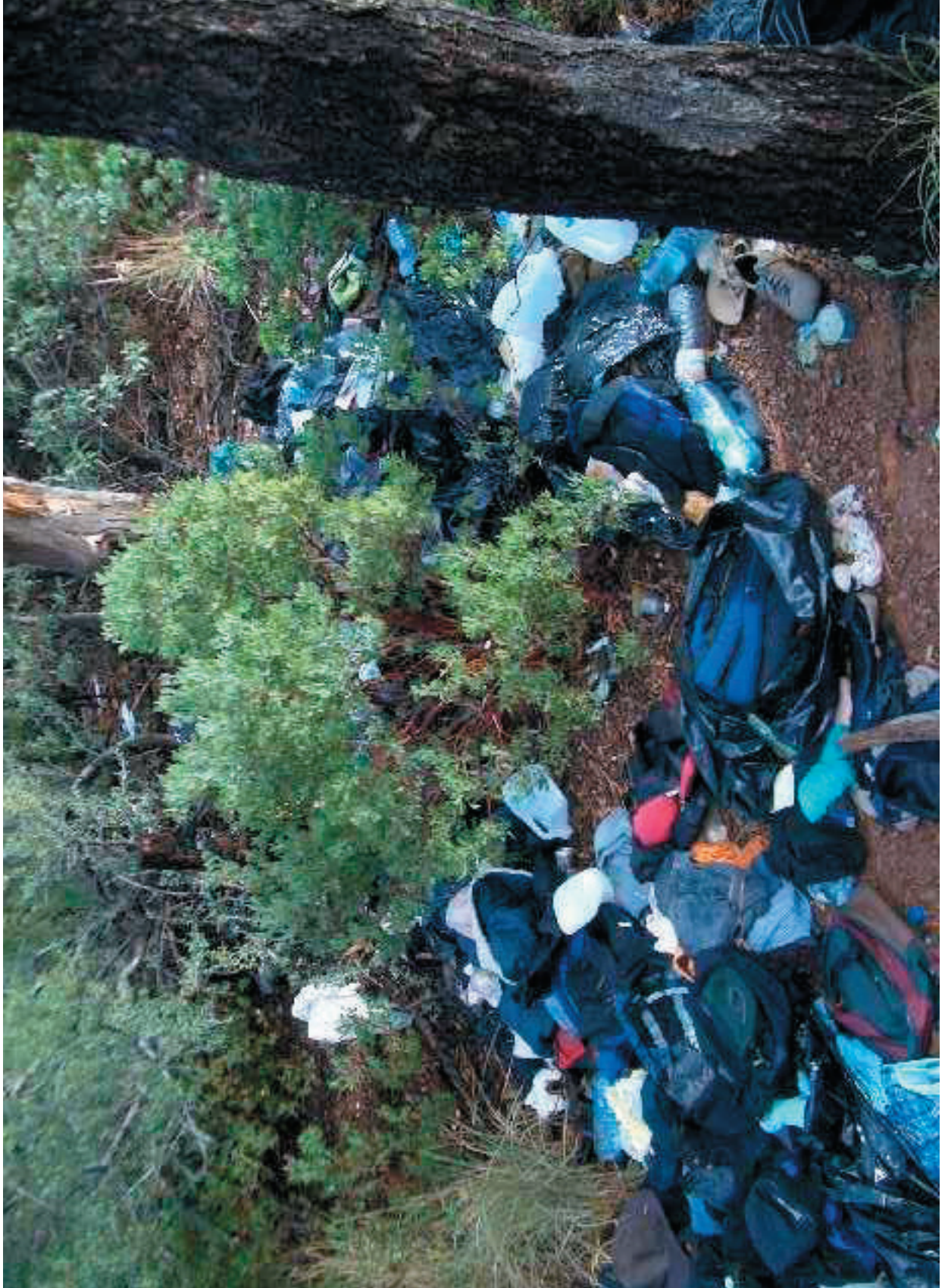
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# Arizona Daily Star



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## Advice for traveling in the borderlands region of Southern Arizona

By Mark A. Hart

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

**A** U.S. surveyor and a suspected lookout for Mexican drug runners exchanged gunfire near the border April 9 after a short standoff that found them pointing weapons at each other, according to a Pima County Sheriff's Department report.

The surveyor was looking for stone monuments that mark the U.S.-Mexico border near Tres Bolas Ranch, south of Arivaca. The incident barely rated a local headline in the aftermath of the March 27 murder of Douglas-area rancher Robert Krentz, calls for deploying National Guard troops along the border, and Arizona's passage of the nation's toughest illegal immigration law.

But its significance was not lost on those who work in borderlands wilderness areas. It's an all-too-common occurrence. Another such encounter happened in June 2009 when a state wildlife officer doing fieldwork and two other government employees were fired on by suspected drug smugglers or bandits in the Tumacacori Mountains.

Ask local ranchers and they'll either say that they'd welcome the Minute-men, or that reporting illegal immigrants isn't their job and they fear reprisals if they did.

Outdoor enthusiasts who recreate near the border in such places as the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, Coronado National Forest, or San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge should take note. Some advice:

The Border Patrol apprehends an average of 900 people daily in its Tucson sector, from New Mexico to the Yuma County line. They and others leave their many footprints on what at first may look like cattle paths or game trails.

These travel routes used by illegal immigrants include "layup spots," where migrant workers often leave clothing and other personal items while awaiting vehicle transport elsewhere. Abandoned vehicles in the area further signal illegal activity. Supplies, drugs or people may be hidden nearby.

All such areas should be avoided, especially because there are many cell phone and radio "dead" zones in the borderlands. When it doubt, one should simply leave the area.

Other precautions include:

- Language and cultural barriers increase risk encounters. People in distress may ask for food, water or other assistance. As a general rule, make no contact unless absolutely necessary, and don't pick up hitchhikers.

Remember that every person you are in contact with poses a potential risk, and that a higher occurrence of unex-

pected encounters is likely. Similarly, expect to encounter law enforcement activity.

Unattended vehicles are subject to being damaged or stolen — lock up every time and place valuables out of sight. Back up into parking spots to speed up exiting an area if need be.

Carry a Global Positioning System unit. Always know your location and be able to describe it if you need to call for help.

Let others know your expected routes, destinations and when you expect to return.

Familiarize yourself with the location of nearby Border Patrol checkpoints, and include the Border Patrol's main 1-877-USBP-HELP number in your cell-phone address book as well as other emergency contact numbers.

E-mail Mark A. Hart at [MHart@azgfd.gov](mailto:MHart@azgfd.gov)



**Mark A. Hart** is a public information officer for the Arizona Game and Fish Department in Tucson.